

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

We claim:

1. (currently amended) An attenuated strain of *Flavobacterium columnare* resistant to rifampicin and effective for eliciting an immune response in fish which is protective against infection by virulent strains of *Flavobacterium columnare* wherein said strain of *Flavobacterium columnare* is selected from the group consisting of NRRL B-30303 and B-30304.

2. (canceled)

3. (original) The attenuated strain as described in Claim 2 wherein said strain of *Flavobacterium columnare* is NRRL B-30303.

4. (original) The attenuated strain as described in Claim 2 wherein said strain of *Flavobacterium columnare* is NRRL B-30304.

5. (currently amended) A vaccine for protecting fish against infection by virulent strains of *Flavobacterium columnare* comprising: (1) ~~in an effective immunization~~ a dosage effective to protect fish against infection by virulent strains of *Flavobacterium columnare* the attenuated strain of *Flavobacterium columnare* of Claim 1; and (2) a carrier.

6. (canceled)

7. (currently amended) The vaccine as described in Claim 6
5 wherein said strain of *Flavobacterium columnare* is NRRL
B-30303.

8. (currently amended) The vaccine as described in Claim 6
5 wherein said strain of *Flavobacterium columnare* is NRRL
B-30304.

9. (original) The vaccine as described in Claim 5 wherein
said carrier is water.

10. (original) A method of providing protection for fish
against infection by virulent strains of *Flavobacterium columnare*
comprising administering the vaccine of Claim 5 to said fish.

11. (original) A method of Claim 10 wherein said fish is
catfish.

12. (original) The method of Claim 10 wherein said
administering is by means of immersion of said fish in an aqueous
medium containing said vaccine.

13. (original) The method of Claim 11 wherein said administration is by means of immersion in an aqueous system.

14. (original) The method of Claim 12 wherein said attenuated strain of *Flavobacterium columnare* is present in the immersion medium at a concentration greater than or equal to about 1×10^5 cfu/ml.

15. (original) The method of Claim 13 wherein said attenuated strain of *Flavobacterium columnare* is present in the immersion bath at a concentration greater than or equal to about 1×10^5 cfu/ml.